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ABSTRACT

The act of reading is holistic and involves acquisition of facts, concepts, and generalizations. With Instructional Management Systems (IMS) and state mandated testing, however, reading too frequently becomes a means of appraising the achievement of students in acquiring word recognition skills as well as diverse comprehension abilities. School systems and teachers of reading should emphasize the tenets of individualized reading. Individualized reading advocates believe that: (1) the act of reading is holistic and not fragmented; (2) students should select reading materials within a flexible framework; and (3) the student should be heavily involved in appraising his/her reading performance. Holistic means of assisting students in reading stressed within the framework of individualized reading philosophies may also be emphasized with the utilization of basal readers. Emphasis should not be on students learning isolated phonics sounds. A better emphasis would be for each student to learn phonics generalizations while reading content. Students should be active participants in learning. To achieve higher levels of cognition, students need to bring meaning to subject matter. Reading skills must be secured and utilized within the framework of quality holistic reading experiences. (RS)

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THE INTEGRATED READING CURRICULUM

Considerable debate has been in evidence pertaining to how reading should be taught. During the 1960's and 1970's, the debate centered around approaches to the teaching of reading. The approaches included the use of individualized reading, basal readers, language experience methods, the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA), linguistic procedures, as well as programmed textbooks.

During the 1980's, behaviorism as a psychology of learning has been strongly advocated. With behaviorism, the following are in evidence:

1. precise, measurably stated objectives for students to achieve.
2. state mandated objectives for teachers to stress in teaching students.
3. state wide testing to determine the extent to which students are achieving the precise goals.
4. the use of standardized tests (norm referenced) to measure learner progress in reading.
5. instructional management systems (IMS) developed on the local district level. IMS plans contain behaviorally stated objectives. After instruction, the teacher can measure if a student has/has not achieved the specific goal.

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The New Debate in Reading

With IMS and state mandated testing, emphasis is placed upon students achieving precise, measurably stated objectives. The tests within the IMS or state mandated testing are to be valid. The test items then measure what has been taught by the reading teacher to assist students tc attain the precise ends. If a first grade teacher has ninety objectives in reading for learners to achieve, much emphasis in ongoing lessons and units will focus on students achieving the stated objectives. Each objective is highly specific, such as the student will underline the "fr" sound correctly on a worksheet in ten words pronounced by the teacher. With ninety precise objectives for student attainment in a school year, much drill and practice can be in evidence. There may be little time left over for enjoyment of reading. The measurably stated objectives have fragmented the act of reading into developing specific skills in phonics, syllabication, and structural analysis. Reading orally and silently to comprehend worthwhile subject matter may be minimized.

The act of reading is holistic and involves acquisition of facts, concepts, and generalizations. Relationship of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs must be perceived by students. Comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading

instruction. Subject matter may be understood through reading for a variety of reasons or purposes. These reasons or purposes include reading for facts, sequence of ideas, main ideas, and generalizations. Additional comprehension skills involve critical reading, creative reading, reading to solve problems, as well as recreational reading. Even with all of the above purposes or reasons for reading content, subject matter should not be divided into isolated, fragmented parts. Rather the whole or gestalt of content read is vital. Content is related and does not occur in fragments or pieces.

With IMS and state mandated testing, too frequently reading becomes a means of appraising the achievement of students in acquiring word recognition skills (phonics, syllabication, and structural analysis), as well as diverse comprehension abilities. These skills and abilities are measured very frequently in isolation from the actual act of reading.

The writer would recommend that school systems and teachers of reading emphasize increasingly so, the tenets of individualized reading. Advocates of individualized reading believe that each person is at a different level of achievement compared to others in the classroom. Library books are utilized as reading materials. Learners

individually select their own sequential library books to read. Ideally, each reads at his/her optimal rate of speed. Library books chosen by a student are of personal interest and purpose. Each book selected is on the reading level of understanding of the chooser. After the completion of reading a library book, the student needs to have a conference with the reading teacher to check comprehension, attitude, and oral reading abilities. The teacher needs to know the content of library books read by students in order to have a quality conference.

Individualized reading advocates believe that

1. the act of reading is holistic and not fragmented. The entire library book is read by a student, prior to having a conference with the reading teacher.

2. students should select reading materials within a flexible framework. The learner must do the reading. The teacher is a stimulator and guide for students in reading. He/she, however, does not choose reading materials for students. The only exception would be if a student is unable to select a library book to read. If this should be the case, the teacher must select an appropriate book for the student to read.

3. the student is heavily involved in appraising his/her reading performance. To appraise comprehension in reading a library book, open ended discussions are in evidence. To evaluate word recognition through oral reading, the learner selects the section within the conference framework.

Individualized reading is quite opposite of the measurably stated objectives movement. The former is holistic, the latter tends to be fragmented. The reading

curriculum would benefit from being holistic in that students actually read and engage in much reading. A primary goal of reading instruction should be to develop attitudes of appreciation and interest within students to read. Each student should then have a greater intrinsic desire in wanting to read. These attitudes of appreciation and interest should motivate learners to increase their desire to read.

Further Goals in the Teaching of Reading

Holistic means of assisting students in reading stressed within the framework of individualized reading philosophies may also be emphasized with the utilization of basal readers. With carefully chosen, quality basal readers, students must have ample opportunities to read and enjoy the content. If IMS is utilized, time for reading instruction becomes fragmented. Learners then achieve precise, measurable objectives. The specific objectives may be totally unrelated to each other. There may be so many precise goals to attain that little time is left for the actual reading in depth of selected stories in the basal reader. Students learn to read by reading. Isolated skills may be measurable, but can students apply what has been learned? The major objective in reading is to develop

quality attitudes which encourage doing more reading on the part of each student.

In a holistic plan in the teaching of reading, students learn to identify new words when they read subject matter. In contextual situations, many new words are recognized by the learner. The teacher or a good reader can give assistance to those students who cannot identify a word while in the actual act of reading. In a stimulating environment, rich with reading materials, students locate content of personal interest. Interest in reading can hurdle many difficulties in word recognition and identification problems. To be sure, selected new words may need to be printed, neatly and legibly, on the chalkboard prior to the actual act of reading. However, these new words must be integrated into a contextual situation involving the actual act of reading.

With measurable stated goals, too frequently the emphasis has been on students learning isolated phonics sounds. Better it would be if each student learns phonics generalizations while reading content. When reading content from library books and textbooks, students may achieve many goals pertaining to phoeneme-grapheme relationships. Becoming a proficient reader is a must in the teaching of reading rather than emphasizing lesson after lesson of

phonics instruction. While reading content, students develop and perceive patterns in sound-symbol relationships.

Students should be active participants in learning. Too frequently, passivity is inherent within learners. Teachers raise questions for students to answer pertaining to content read. Rather active learners should do the asking of questions. They tend to see gaps in knowledge and desire to have these deficiencies minimized. With quality questions raised, answers can be generated. Purpose for learning is involved when students identify relevant questions and problems. Intrinsically, a desire is there to secure needed information. Basal reader content, as well as other reference sources, may be utilized to secure needed information. Active involvement of students is preferable to passive recipients in the classroom.

To achieve higher levels of cognition, students need to bring meaning to subject matter. Critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem solving emphasize learners determining and clarifying content read. Traditionally, the perception has been that students passively acquire meaning from subject matter read. Content in the basal reader then moves from the textbook to the student, if the latter secures meaning from what the author has written. Rather, the learner with his/her background experiences should bring

understanding and interpretation to facts, concepts, and generalizations read.

In Closing

A fragmented reading curriculum emphasizes isolated measurably stated objectives for students to attain. Rather, reading emphasizes students bringing meaning to subject matter read. Reading involves word recognition and comprehension skills. However, skills must be secured and utilized within the framework of quality holistic reading experiences.